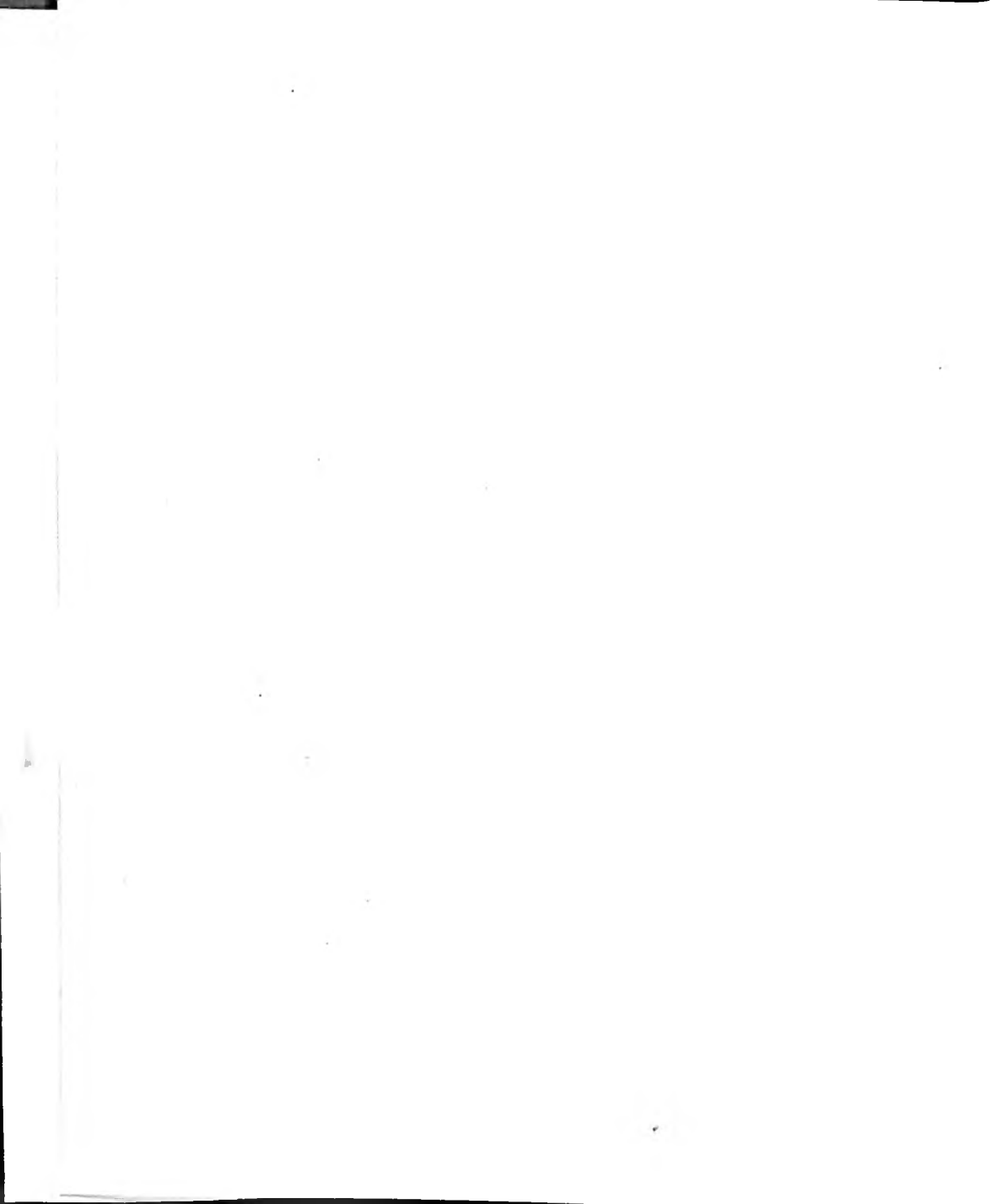
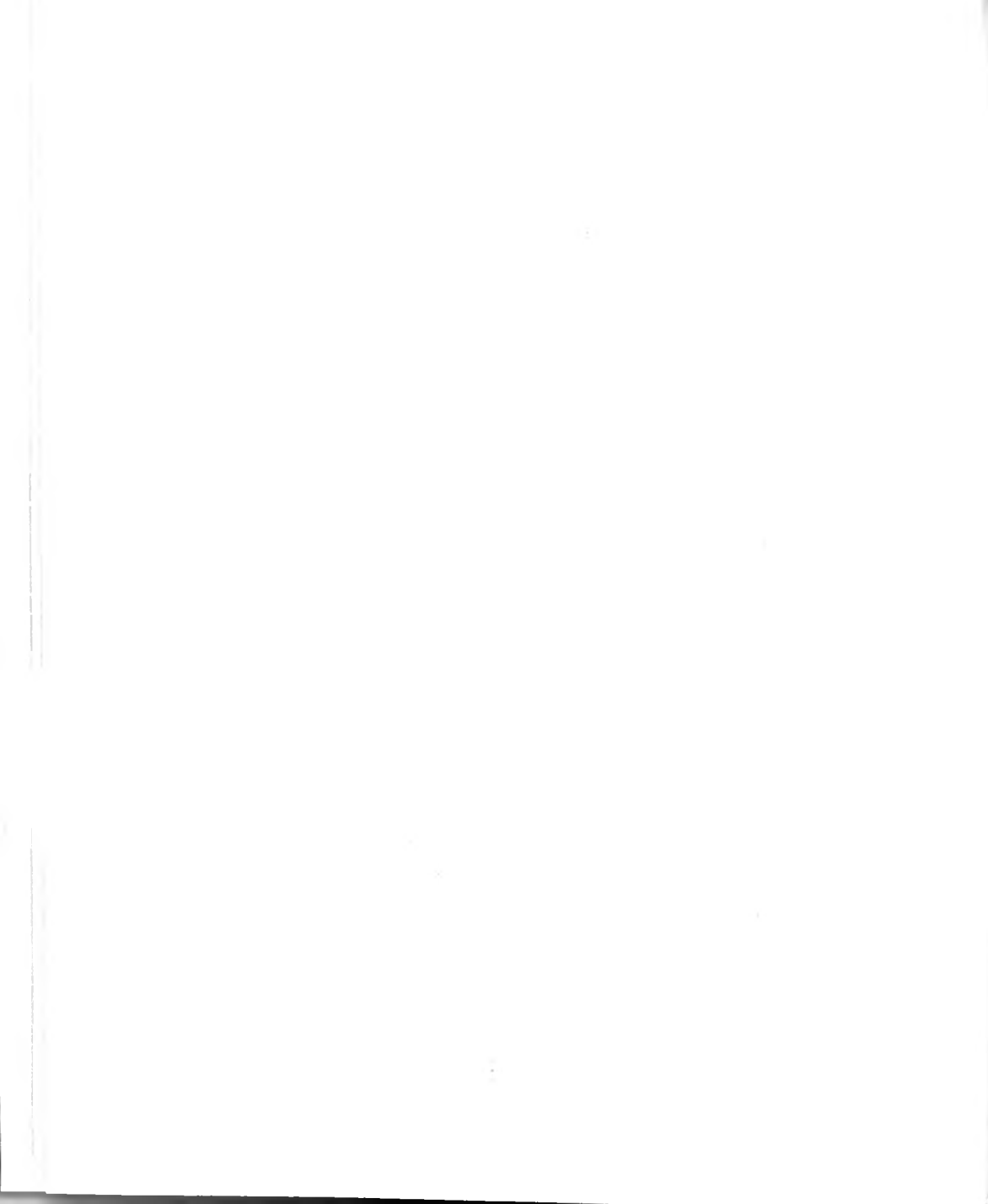


THE STORY OF THE
BLUE BACK CHART



THE STORY OF THE
BLUE BACK CHART.

*This history is published
in the Coronation year of
His Majesty
King George VI.
1937.*



*As a small mark of appreciation
of devoted service
this story is respectfully dedicated to
Past and Present
Members of the staff of one of the
oldest established business houses
in the City of London
1670 — 1937*

*“If a man love the labour of any trade, apart from any
question of success or fame, the gods have called him.”
—Robert Louis Stevenson.*

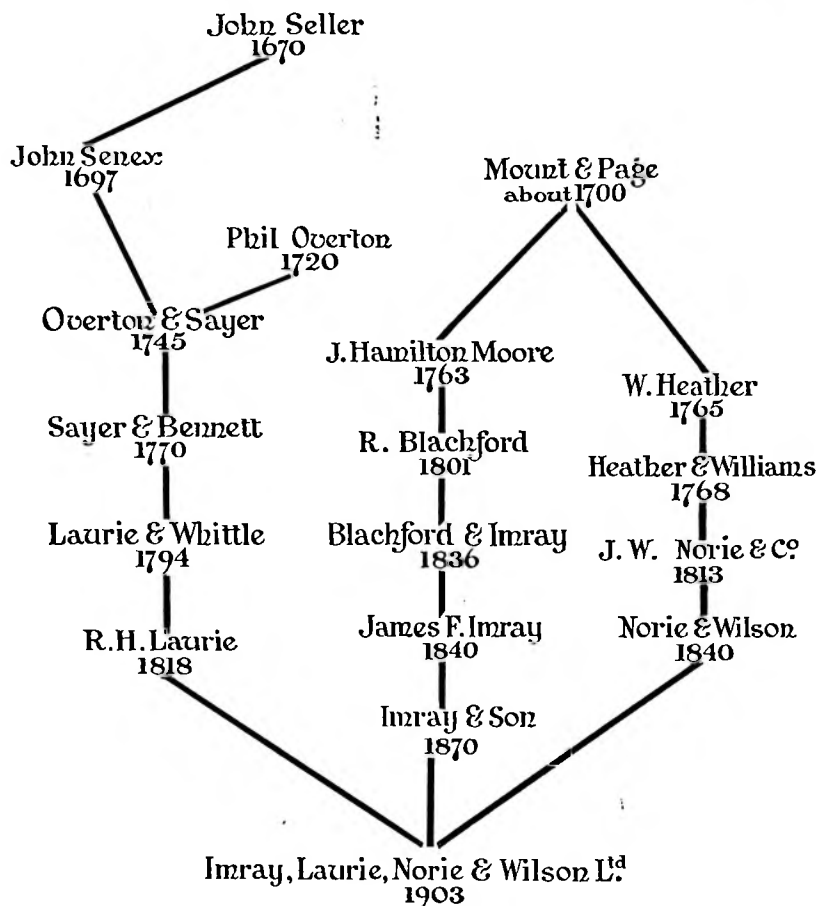


Engraved Title of The English Pilot, by John Seller.
1670.

THE STORY OF THE BLUE BACK CHART

*Compiled from Notes
collected from various sources
by
ELENA WILSON*

IMRAY, LAURIE, NORIE & WILSON, LTD.,
123 MINORIES, LONDON, E.C.3.



CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

THE STORY OF THE BLUE BACK CHART

IN response to many requests from our friends we now put into their hands a brief survey of the history of our firm, tracing the development of private chart publishing from its earliest days, under the administration of those ancient firms which were the predecessors of our own.

This story, compiled from notes collected from various sources, will be of interest from the historical point of view, and it will clearly show that Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson may with truth be said to represent, in the present day, a firm which existed in 1670, its business of the publishing of Charts and Sailing Directions having been carried on without interruption since that date.

The facts recorded can be verified by reference to a collection of ancient Charts and Sailing Directions in possession of the firm, and also to copies of early Charts published by its predecessors, which are to be seen in the British Museum.

THE STORY OF THE BLUE BACK CHART

The antiquity of private enterprise in the publishing of charts may be proved by a glance at the pages of history at the close of the sixteenth century, but it may be a fact little known to the British navigator of to-day that systematic chart producing was unknown in this country until a much later date.

It was, in fact, to the Dutch that we were indebted for the Charts and Sailing Directions originally in use by the British Navy and Mercantile Marine.

In the year 1583 Lucas Iansz Waghaener, of Enchuysen, published at Leyden a work entitled "Der Spieghel der Zeevaerdt." This was copied in 1588 by Anthony Ashley as the "Mariners' Mirrour." Introduced into England, it became known by a corruption of the name of its author, and was the first "Waggoner"; a term which came later into general use, with the "Flambeaux de la Mer" of the French, and the "Sea-Torches" of our own country, up to the end of the seventeenth century.

These last were adaptations of the work of the famous hydrographic authority Van Keulen of Amsterdam, upon whom, in fact, British Hydrography largely relied in those days for the data from which its Charts and Sailing Directions were compiled.

T H E
Lightning Columne,
O R
SEA-MIRROUR,

Containing the Sea-Coasts of the Northern, Eastern and Western NAVIGATION. Setting forth in divers necessaire Sea-Cards, all the Ports, Rivers, Bays, Roads, Depths and Sands. Very curiously placed on its due Polus height furnished. With the Discoveries of the chief Countries and on what Cours and Distance they lay one from another. Never there to fore so Clearly laid open, and here and there very diligently Bettered and Augmented for the Use of all SEA-MEN.

A S A L S O O T H E

Situation of the Northerly Countries, as Islands, the Strate Davids, the Use of Jan Maven, Bears Island, Old Greenland, Spitsbergen and Nova Zembla. Adorneth with many Sea-Cards and Discoveries.

Gathered out of the Experience and practice of divers Pilots and Lovers of the famous Art of Navigation.

Where unto is added a brief Instruction of the Art of Navigation, together with New TABLES of the Suns Declination, with an New Almanach.

A t A M S T E R D A M,

Printed by CASPARUS LOOTS-MAN, Bookseller
In the Loots-man, upon the Water, 1697.

With Privilege for fiftiezen Years.

An Old Dutch Title, printed in English.
1697.

THE STORY OF THE BLUE BACK CHART

Practically the first chart-seller established in this country was John Seller, who set up for himself at The Sign of the Mariners' Compass, Hermitage Stairs, Wapping, in the reign of Charles II.

It was there that in November of the year 1670 he published the first part of "The English Pilot," by which he obtained for himself the title of Hydrographer to the King.

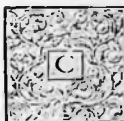
The engraved copper plates of the charts in this series he purchased from Holland, removing the Dutch titles and inscribing his own name in their place.

From him, the pioneer of British chart-producing, the firm of Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson, through the house of Laurie, as will be seen later, claims descent by purchase and family connection.

Seller's business appears to have proved a successful one, and in the course of the century other houses of a like nature came into being, notably those of Mount & Page, of The Postern Row, to whom it is believed that the firms of James Imray and Norie & Wilson succeeded; John Senex, at Salisbury Court, and Phil Overton, at the Golden Buck in Fleet Street, from the conjunction of whom descended the house of R. H. Laurie.



Charles R.



CHARLES the Second, By the Grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c. To all Our loving Subjects, of what degree, condition, or quality soever, within any Our Kingdoms or Dominions, greeting. Whereas We have been given to understand, that Our Trusty and Wellbelov'd Subject, John Seller, Our Hydrographer in Ordinary, hath been for these several years last past, Collecting and compiling two large Treatises of Navigation, the one Entituled the English Pilot, the other the Sea Atlas, Describing the Sea-Coasts, Capes, Headlands, Bays, Roads, Rivers, Harbours, Rocks, Sands, Soundings, Shoals, and places of Danger in most of the known parts of the World; a Work of very great Expence and Cost, and not hitherto performed in this Our Kingdom. The first Part whereof being now fully and entirely finished, We are informed that Endeavours are made by some of Our Subjects, secretly to Copy and Reprint the same, but under another Title, to the great prejudice and discouragement of the said John Seller. We therefore taking the same into Our Princely Consideration, and minding the great usefulness of this Work, have thought fit, for his future Encouragement, hereby to declare Our Pleasure, and accordingly We do by these presents strictly prohibit and forbid all Our Subjects, within Our Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland, to Copy, Epitomize, or Reprint the said Treatises of Navigation, (Entituled the English Pilot, and the Sea Atlas) in whole or in part, or under any other Name or Title whatsoever, or to Copy or Counterfeit any of the Maps, Plans, or Charts that shall be in the said Treatises, within the term of thirty years next ensuing the date of these Presents, without the consent and approbation of him the said John Seller, his heirs, Executors or Assigns: And that no such Books, Maps, Charts or Plans, or any Part or Copy thereof, be imported from beyond the Seas, either under the Name of Dutch Waggoners, or Lightening Columns, or under any other Name whatsoever, during the said term of thirty years, As the Persons offending will answer the contrary, nor only by the forfeiture of the said Books, Plans, Charts, or Maps, but at their utmost peril: Whereof as well the Wardens and Company of Stationers of Our City of London; As all and singular our Officers of Our Customs in our Port of London; or any other Place within Our Dominions; And all other Our loving Subjects, whom it may concern, are to take particular notice, that due obedience be given to this Our Royal Command accordingly. Given under Our Signet and Sign Manual, at Our Court at Whitehall, the 22^d day of March, 1675, in the 25th year of Our Reign.

By His Majesties Command.

Arlington.

Letters Patent of H.M. King Charles II
granting 30 years' copyright to John Seller's Nautical Publications.

To His Royal Highness,

J A M E S,

Duke of *YORK* and *ALBAN*y, Earl of *ULSTER* &c.
Lord High Admiral of *ENGLAND* & *IRELAND*, &c.



Is no small disparagement (*Most Illustrious Prince*) to this Famous Nation, that Strangers should deprive us, not only of the honour, but advantage of setting forth general Descriptions of the Sea-Coasts; with publick Informations and Directions for avoiding those dangers that ordinarily attend all our Navigations; a thing so commendable in it self, and so necessary and beneficial to the great Concerns of our Maritime Affairs, as if the knowledge of English Men in the Art and Practice of Navigation were so imperfect, or our Atchievements and Discoveries abroad so inconsiderable and inferior to theirs, that we must see no further than their Books direct us, nor know how to avoid a *Shelf* without a Foreign Pilot. 'Tis not (*Great Sir*) that there hath been heretofore, or are at present wanting, persons of far greater Endowments, and better enabled to serve the Nation in this kind than my self, that I have set upon this ensuing Work, but seeing none hath hitherto undertaken it, and the complaints and necessities of Mariners for want of our Antient, but especially Modern Experiences, being (not without cause) very many, I thought it my duty, for the service of my Countrey, to adventure on this great Trouble and Charge, which hath been the first Essay of this Nature that hath been done in *England*; I now humbly present to Your ROYAL HIGHNESS for Patronage, knowing none more able by Authority to protect it, nor any more willing and ready to countenance and promote the *Arts Mathematical*, especially that part belonging to Navigation: Be pleased then, *Royal Sir*, to pardon my presumptuous Dedication, and receive it favourably, as a tender of the desire I have on all occasions to manifest my self

Your Royal Highness's

Most Humble

Servant,

JOHN SELLER.

THE STORY OF THE BLUE BACK CHART

Combinations of these famous names, and also those of lesser contemporary houses, may be seen on those examples which are still extant of charts of the period: an interesting proof of the fact that the practice of publication in partnership was then much in vogue.

A good example of this is shown in the third part of "The English Pilot," which was published in collaboration by Seller, Mount & Page and Charles Price in 1703, and also in the fourth book of the same work, from which we quote the following imprints:—

1689. "Printed for William Fisher at the Postern on Tower Hill and John Thornton at the Plat in The Minories."
1706. "Printed for John Thornton, Hydrographer, at the sign of the England, Scotland and Ireland, in The Minories, and Richard Mount at Postern Row in Tower Hill."

Of the evolution of several of these houses a more detailed account will be given later. Suffice it at present to say that during the following century all the lesser houses had become absorbed in one or other of the three well-known firms which eventually came to be represented by that of Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson.

THE STORY OF THE BLUE BACK CHART

A New Map, or Chart of
The **MEDITERRANEAN SEA**
made from the draughts of the Pilots of Marseilles and
Corrected by the best Astronomical Observations
By Order of
M^{GR} LE COMTE DE MAUREPAS
1738
To which is annexed
A Draught of the Straits mouth with the Bays of Cadix, —
Gibraltar, and Malaga, the Port of Legorne, Naples, Mahon,
Smyrna, Thessalonica, Scandaroon, and Alexandria with
the Course of the Nile from thence to Grand Cairo.

Title of Mediterranean Sea Chart by Senex. 1738.

It was not until 1795 that the Government, having purchased a small collection of charts from the East India Company, founded, with these as its basis, a Hydrographic Department at the Admiralty.

During the next half-century, however, the private Chart-publisher was still entrusted with the production of charts, which were compiled from information supplied by Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, or Commanders of the Royal Navy, to whom such publications were, by permission, individually dedicated.

THE STORY OF THE BLUE BACK CHART

In more recent years, however, the great increase in navigation generally has caused the chief maritime powers, Britain not excepted, to realise the necessity of forming Government departments officially to survey its own coasts and harbours, and upon these various authoritative sources the private chart-producer must now rely.



A Title of a Map by Senex, dedicated to Sir Isaac Newton.



A Title from Seller's English Pilot.

THE HOUSE OF LAURIE.

The distinction of being the oldest firm of Chart 1670 Publishers in this country must be accorded to the house of Laurie—it dates from the beginning of English Hydrography.

Although, as previously mentioned, this firm can with every show of reason claim John Seller as its original founder, the forging of the first link of its unbroken continuity may be attributed to John Senex and Phil Overton, who flourished in London as Chart Publishers at the beginning of the 18th century, merging their businesses in 1745 into that of Robert Sayer.

John Senex, the famous cosmographer who started 1697-1740 on many works believed to have been acquired from John Seller, carried on business for many years at the sign of the "Globe," Salisbury Court, moving later to the "Globe" by St. Dunstan's Church, Fleet Street. His excellent publications, both nautical and scientific, gained for him an undisputed reputation—many of the latter being produced with the help of the famous Dr. Halley and Sir Isaac Newton.

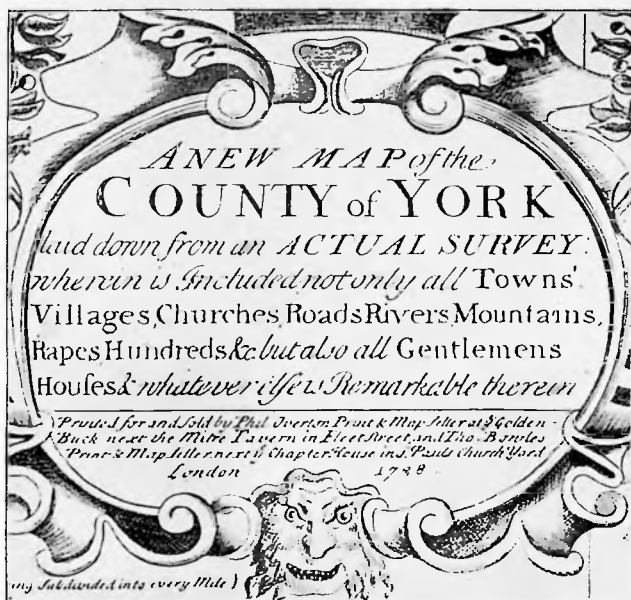
THE STORY OF THE BLUE BACK CHART

As a reward for his labours he was in the year 1728 elected a member of the Royal Society.

1720-1745 Phil Overton as a Map and Chart Publisher, established himself at "Ye Sign of Ye Golden Buck by Ye Mitre Inn," Fleet Street, in 1720—moving afterwards to No. 53—and at this address this ancient firm remained without a break for over one hundred and fifty years, only moving when compelled to do so in the year 1895.

1745-1795 Robert Sayer, alone or in partnership with Overton or John Bennett (the latter gentleman joined him in 1770), continued and greatly extended the business—his Catalogue of Charts and Pilots, extending over forty-five octavo pages, included amongst others revised editions of the works originally attributable to John Senex.

Thomas Jeffreys, Hydrographer and Cartographer to the King, published many of his nautical works through Sayer, and the excellent Charts known as the "North American Pilot," surveyed and drawn up by that famous navigator, Captain James Cook, R.N., in 1760—1766, were also published by him. So excellent were these surveys that they stood the test of nearly a century of use, only being superseded by Captain Bayfield's survey in about the year 1835.



A Title from a Map by Phil Overton. 1728.



Reproduction of the Title from "A Chart of the West Coast of Newfoundland" (North American Pilot), surveyed in A.D. 1760-1766 by the famous Navigator, Captain James Cook, R.N., and published by permission of the Rt. Hon. Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty in the year 1770 by Robert Sayer & J. Bennett, 53, Fleet Street.

The original engraved Copperplate is in the possession of Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson.

THE STORY OF THE BLUE BACK CHART

Another name of which British seamen should be proud is that of Captain James Huddart, who was for many years in the service of the East India Company. Much of his fame is due to the publicity given to his hydrographic works by Sayer.

His fine surveys of the St. George's Channel, etc., executed at the expense of the firm in 1777 and subsequent years, rendered good service to navigation.

A SURVEY
OF THE TIGRIS
FROM CANTON
TO THE ISLAND OF LANKEET.

TO WILLIAM HENRY PIGOU Esq.
First Supercargo for the Affairs
of the Honourable East India Company

THIS SURVEY IS INSCRIBED

by his most obedient

humble Servant

A. D. 1788.

J. Huddart

Title and Dedication of a Chart surveyed by Captain James Huddart, and published in 1785 by Robert Sayer.

The original drawings are in the possession of Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson.

THE STORY OF THE BLUE BACK CHART

It was due to the able direction of Robert Sayer that hydrography attained the importance it deserved during the middle and later years of the 18th century—and the mariners of all time will owe him a debt of gratitude for the enterprise he showed on their behalf.

Robert Sayer, soon after John Bennett's death in 1787, relinquished the business to his two friends, Robert Laurie and James Whittle.

The business was carried on by Robert Laurie 1795-1812 and James Whittle till 1812, when the latter took into partnership Richard Holmes Laurie (son of Robert Laurie).

After the death of J. Whittle in 1818, R. H. Laurie 1812-1858 took over the whole business, and held it to his death in 1858. It was during this period that a large number of charts were published, many being drawn up by such well-known hydrographers as De la Rochette, John Purdy, Alexander Findlay and his son Alexander George Findlay.

The business was further extended by Alexander 1858-1878 George Findlay, who devoted years of intense labour and application to his unique series of Six Nautical Directories of the Great Oceans.

THE STORY OF THE BLUE BACK CHART

1875 1903 At Mr. Findlay's death the business was taken over and carried on by his nephews, D. W. and W. R. Kettle.

In 1895 the firm removed from No. 53 Fleet Street to new premises in Great Eastern Street, after a tenancy of over 150 years—amalgamating in 1903 with James Imray & Son and Norie & Wilson—thus forming the limited company of Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson.

*To The Honorable The Court of Directors
Of the United East India Company*

THIS CHART.

*Intended as an Accompaniment to the BOOK of DIRECTIONS
For NAVIGATING to, from, and in the EAST INDIES.*

Is Inscribed by THEIR

Faithful and Obedient Servant.

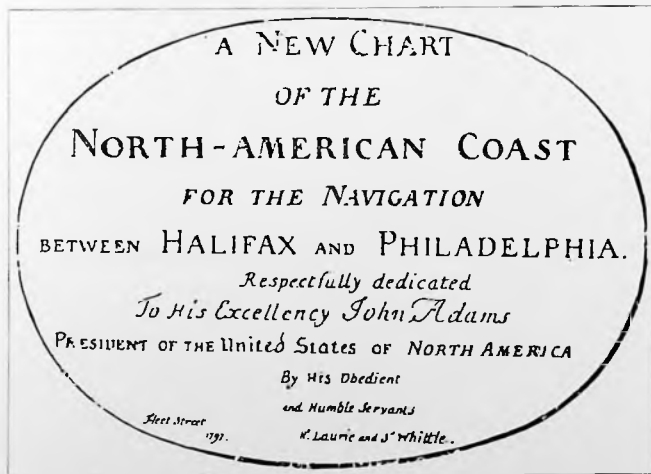
Registered by John D. Sayer

James Horsburgh.

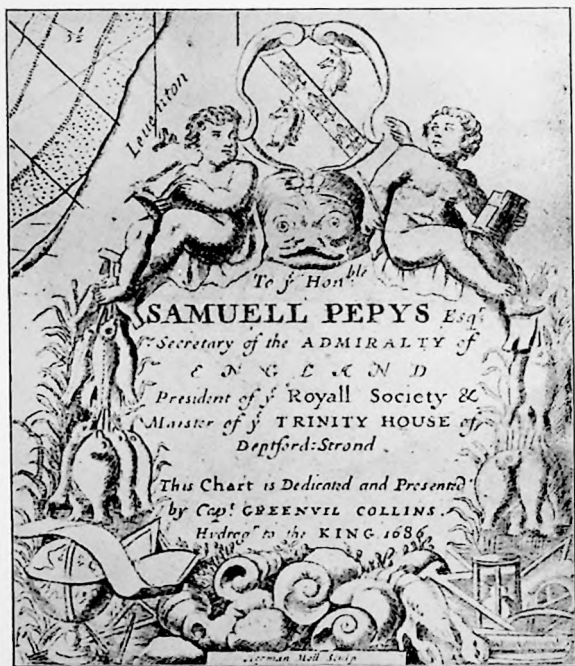
This Chart was printed and published for Thomas
Jefferys by Robert Sayer.
1788.



Title and Dedication of a Chart published 1795.



Title and Dedication of a Chart published 1797.
 The original drawings of this Chart are in the possession of Imray,
 Laurie, Norie & Wilson.



Dedication of a Chart published by
 Mount & Page on Tower Hill.

THE HOUSE OF IMRAY.

It is an open question as to whether the house of James Imray & Son or that of Norie & Wilson is the older. Both firms claim to have been founded on the older house of Mount & Page. Be this as it may, by the end of the 18th century the two firms were issuing catalogues which comprised large numbers of charts published by their respective houses.

The progress of the house of Imray was steady and continuous, and during the sixties and seventies of the 19th century their Catalogue was largely extended, notably with Charts of the Eastern Navigations and Coasts of America.

In the year 1763 John Hamilton Moore, author 1763-1800 of that celebrated work "The Practical Navigator" (a twelfth edition of which appeared in 1796), took over the management of affairs, and in about the year 1790 was appointed Hydrographer to the Duke of Clarence.

Robert Blachford, son-in-law of John Hamilton 1801-1840 Moore, took over and carried on the business, and he was responsible for much enterprise.

On James Imray's joining with Robert Blachford, 1836 the title of the firm was altered to Blachford & Imray.

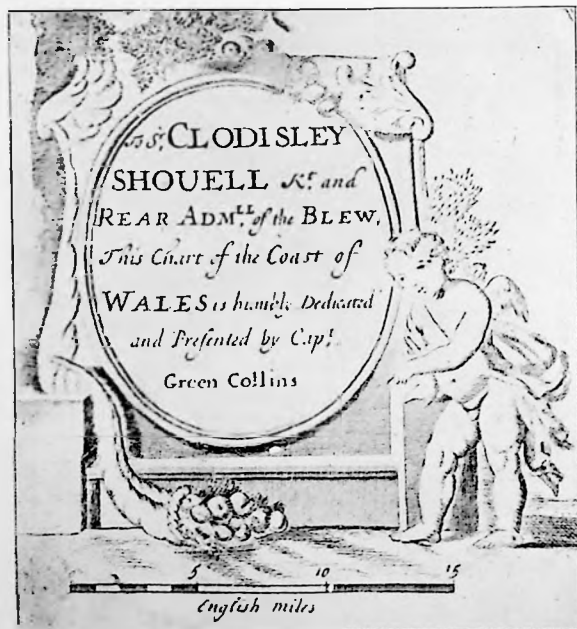
On the death of Mr. Blachford the firm became 1840-1899 James Imray, being carried on by James Imray, who died in 1870, and his son James F. Imray, who died in 1891.

THE STORY OF THE BLUE BACK CHART

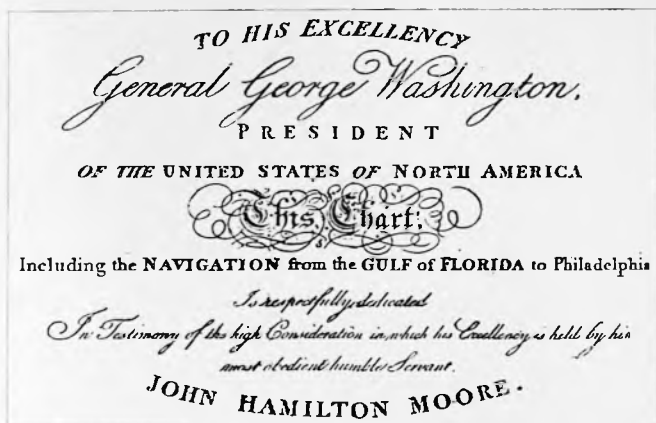
On the death of the latter the business was continued by his two sons, James Cutbill Imray and Herbert P. Imray.

1889

James Imray & Son amalgamated with Norie & Wilson.



Dedication of a Chart published by Mount & Page on Tower Hill.



[[Dedication of a Chart published by J. Hamilton Moore.
 1799.



Dedication of a Chart published by Robert Blachford.
 1835.



Title and Dedication of a Chart published by Heather. 1796.



Title of a Chart published by Norie. 1823.

THE HOUSE OF NORIE & WILSON.

In tracing the origin of the house of Norie & Wilson, also, we must go back to the 18th century, to the days of Mount & Page.

But in its early history another name stands 1765-1768 out;--that of William Heather, who in the year 1765 started business in Leadenhall Street, under the sign of the "Little Midshipman," which was afterwards known as No. 157. At this address the firm remained continuously for the long period of 113 years, until it removed to the Minories in the year 1878.

Heather was joined by Williams, and the firm 1768 became Heather & Williams.

The year 1812 was an important one in the 1812 history of the firm, for in that year its conduct passed into the hands of the celebrated mathematician John William Norie.

More than a century has passed since Norie gave to the world the celebrated Epitome of Navigation and Nautical Tables, which, carefully tended and kept up to date, still holds a position of unchallenged supremacy in its own particular sphere.

THE STORY OF THE BLUE BACK CHART

No name, therefore, has been more familiar to many generations of British seamen than that of Norie, and a few particulars of the career of this distinguished man may not here be out of place.

John William Norie was born in London in 1772, and was the son of James Norie, who had been trained for the Presbyterian Ministry, but who had established a flourishing school at Wapping. According to the London Directory of the year 1803 :—

“J. W. Norie resided at the Naval Academy, 157 Leadenhall Street. At the same address William Heather dealt in Books, Charts and Nautical Instruments at the Navigation Warehouse.”

The principal works compiled by Norie are as follow :—

1803. Complete Set of Nautical Tables and Epitome of Practical Navigation, these two works being published for him by Heather, and

1827. Sailing Directions for the S. George and Bristol Channels.

1813 George Wilson, sometime an officer in the Royal Navy, joined J. W. Norie, and traded as “J. W. Norie & Co.,” his son, George Wilson, junior, coming later into the business.



JOHN WILLIAM NORIE

1772—1843.

*From the portrait in water colour
in the National Portrait Gallery, London.*

THE STORY OF THE BLUE BACK CHART

1819 In the year 1819, by the purchase of the business of J. Steel, who had been established on Tower Hill and Cornhill for upwards of half a century, the firm of Norie acquired a further large and varied Catalogue.

1839 Norie retired from business in 1839, and died in Edinburgh in 1843.

1840 Charles Wilson succeeded his cousin, George Wilson junior, and purchased the share of J. W. Norie.

He traded for a few years as "Charles Wilson," subsequently as "Norie & Wilson," until his death in 1884, after which date the business was carried on by his three sons, George, Charles and William, under the same title.

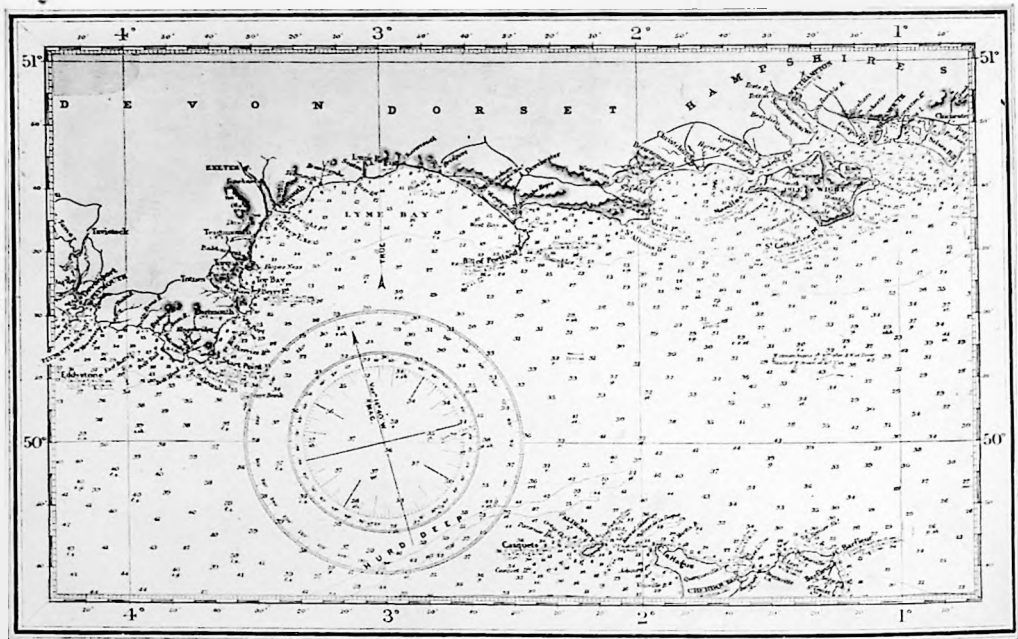
1878 Norie & Wilson removed from Leadenhall Street after a tenancy of about 113 years, to 156, Minories.

1899 James Imray & Son joined Norie & Wilson.

1903 R. H. Laurie joined James Imray & Son and Norie & Wilson, thus forming the present firm of Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson, Ltd., which is now the only commercial house in the world devoted to the production of Charts and Sailing Directions.



157 Leadenhall Street in 1840.



Section of a Chart of the English Channel.
Published by Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson.

THE HOUSE OF IMRAY, LAURIE, NORIE & WILSON.

After the amalgamation in 1903, the business continued to be carried on from 156 Minories until 1924, when, after a tenancy of 46 years, the Company removed to its present premises at 123 Minories. 1903-1937

The Original Directorate of the Company consisted of James Cutbill and Herbert Parbury Imray, representing the House of Imray, Daniel and William Kettle, representing the House of Laurie, Charles and William Wilson, representing the House of Norie & Wilson.

Of the above, James Cutbill Imray continues as Director, together with William Eric Wilson, D.S.O., son of the late William Wilson. 1937

IN CONCLUSION.

The foregoing pages may perhaps have served to show clearly the usefulness of the work of the Chart Publisher, and how private enterprise in this respect, having flourished for more than two centuries through the famous firms whose history we have sketched, may claim an importance which is no less than national.

It has provided the seamen of successive generations and of varied races with the Charts which have been their indispensable equipment, their best safeguards, indeed, in their hazardous calling.

Our summary has, of necessity, been brief and incomplete, but if, by chance, the interest of its subject may for a few moments have proved fascinating to those before whom we have placed it, it will, perhaps, have not been made in vain.

LONG SERVICE.

JOHN APPLETON. Born 1796, succeeded Mr. Dennis as Manager, 55 years, died 1880.

JOHN WILLIAM APPLETON. .. Hydrographer, 55 years.

WILLIAM APPLETON. Hydrographer. Entered firm 1850, retired 1887, 37 years.

JOHN APPLETON. Son of above, Hydrographer, 50 years, retired 1899.

WILLIAM APPLETON. Brother of above. Clerk, about 50 years.

ALBERT ARCHER. .. Draughtsman. About 40 years.

JOHN WILLIAM CASWELL. Clerk. Born 1819, about 60 years, died 1911, age 92.

JEFFREY DENNIS. Manager, 60 years, died 1822. Age 84 years.

DREYSEY FAMILY. Copperplate printers. Three generations, 80 years.

FREWIN FAMILY. Copperplate printers. Father and sons, 50 years.

GEORGE HALL. .. Book-keeper. About 45 years, died 1919.

JOHN STRATTON HOBBS. .. Hydrographer. About 40 years.

HARRY HOLMWOOD. Engraver. About 35 years.

EDWARD JENKINS. Warehouseman. 45 years.

H. D. JENKINS. Hydrographer., Over 50 years, died 1936., Age 92 years.

WILLIAM PETITT. Warehouseman. 52 years, died 1911.

THOMAS PIZZEY. Draughtsman. 40 years, died 1930.

WILLIAM SCOTT. Warehouseman. About 35 years.

GEORGE SHEPHERD. Printer. Over 50 years, died 1928

ALBERT SMITH. Chart liner. 55 years.

WILLIAM SMITH. Chart liner. Over 40 years, died 1898.

ARTHUR WELLAND. Engraver. 50 years, Age 82.

WILLIAM WELLAND. Engraver. Born 1842, 53 years, died 1911. Age 69.

GEORGE WILLS. Warehouseman. About 50 years, died 1924.

GEORGE WIGZELL. .. Warehouseman. 40 years, died 1897.

HARRY WIGZELL. Clerk. 35 years, died 1902.



The Little Wooden Midshipman.

*"A Callous, Obdurate, Conceited
Midshipman, intent on his own
discoveries."—Dombey & Son.*

TRADE SIGNS.

John Seller, 1670

"The Sign of the Mariner's Compass" Wapping.

John Senex, 1697

"The Sign of the Globe," Salisbury Court and Fleet Street.

Mount & Page, 1700

"The Sign of England, Scotland & Ireland," Tower Hill.

Phil Overton, 1720

"The Sign of the Golden Buck," Fleet Street.

William Heather, 1765

"The Sign of the Little Wooden Midshipman," Leadenhall Street.

In the centuries covering this history—the above were some of the signs under which the various firms traded. These signs—except in name—exist no longer, with the exception of the famous figure "The Little Wooden Midshipman," which for a century and more was the sign of William Heather and Norie & Wilson, and since 1903 has fulfilled that role to the present house of Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson, Ltd.

Originally made to replace a much older and larger wooden model (discarded through decay) the present figure made its debut outside Heather's establishment at 157, Leadenhall Street about the year 1795, and as custodian to the entrance appeared daily during the long tenancy of 157, Leadenhall Street and later at 156, Minories. During the air raids on London in 1917 it was considered safer to remove it to a position inside, where it has remained ever since. Well known to the nautical world in the days of "The Old Wooden Walls," its latter day fame must chiefly be attributed to its being immortalized by Charles Dickens as the "Midshipman" of his novel, "Dombey & Son." In this connection, it may be of interest to mention that it is believed that the establishment of Sol Gills was Norie & Wilson's premises in Leadenhall Street—the character of Sol Gills being drawn from Mr. Dennis, the manager at that time.

A Nelson Relic



*Lord Nelson's favourite chair
when Captain of "The Boreas"
frigate. Presented to William
Heather, by his Sailing Master
James Jamieson, becoming the
property of Norie & Wilson
in the year 1814.*